

Congress.

The two Houses of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, convened in Richmond on Monday last. Both bodies jumped at once into the great work before them—the business of doing something to relieve the currency claimed their first and earnest attention. We give the following full

Synopsis of the President's Message

The President rapidly reviews events of the past year, and says that whilst our successes have not equalled our expectations, we have checked the enemy everywhere in his advances.

Our relations with foreign nations is discussed at considerable length. The President regrets that there has been no improvement since his last message in January, and says the conduct of European nations is less impartial and in some cases has assumed the character of positively unfriendliness. Our Commissioners were sent abroad for the purpose of entering into negotiations proper to fix the relative rights and obligations between the Confederate and United States under treaties entered into with foreign powers prior to the separation which has taken place, but this tender on our part was declined. Hence, as we have been refused the benefits of these treaties, they certainly have ceased to be binding, and in the opinion of the President our relations with European powers are now controlled exclusively by the general rules of the law of nations.

Legislation upon the subject of finance is earnestly recommended. Although the magnitude and duration of the war was not at first anticipated, still the resources of the country are so ample and the spirit of the people so devoted to the cause, that relief is within our reach. The financial policy of the Government since its formation is discussed, and the President contends that whilst the provision of the Permanent Constitution in regard to direct taxation cannot be carried into effect in the mode pointed out, it is plain that the duty of Congress is to execute the general intent of the Constitution by making the tax uniform throughout the country. These considerations are greatly enforced by the reflection that an attempt to apportion the taxes amongst the States, some of which are wholly or partially in the occupation of the enemy, would subvert the whole intention of the framers of the Constitution and be productive of most revolting injustice, instead of that just correlation between taxation and representation which was their purpose to secure. With large portions of some of the States occupied by the enemy, what justice would there be in imposing on the remainder the whole amount of taxation of the entire State? What would this be in effect? A mere burden of

the war, and make our own inability to protect them from invasion, as we are required to do by the Constitution, the ground for adding to their losses by an attempted adherence to the latter, in violation of the spirit of that instrument. No such purpose could have been entertained and no such result was contemplated by the framers of the Constitution. We may add weight to those considerations if we reflect that although the Constitution provided that it should go into operation with a representation temporarily distributed among the States, it expressly ordains that after providing for a census within three years after this temporary distribution the representative power is to end until such enumeration shall be made. Would any one argue that because the census cannot be made within the fixed period, the government, at the expiration of that period, shall perish for the want of a representative body?

In any aspect in which the subject can be viewed, I am led to the conclusion already announced, and which is understood to be in accordance with the vote taken in one or both Houses at the last session. I shall, therefore, until we are able to pursue the precise mode required by the Constitution, deem it my duty to approve any law levying taxation, which you are bound to impose in defence of the country, in any other practicable mode; which shall distribute the burden uniformly and impartially on the whole property of the people. In your former legislation you have sought to avoid an increase of the volume of notes in circulation, offering inducements for voluntary funding, and measures were adopted for that purpose, but proved only partially successful, and the evil has now reached such a magnitude as to permit no other remedy than a compulsory reduction of the currency to the amount required by the business of the country. This reduction should be accompanied by a pledge that under no stress of circumstances will that amount be exceeded. No possible mode of using the credit of the government can be so disastrous as the one which disturbs the basis of all exchanges. It renders impossible all calculations of the future values, augments in constantly increasing proportions the price of all commodities, and so depreciates all fixed wages, salaries and incomes, as to render them inadequate to a bare subsistence. It to these be added the still more fatal influence on the moral character of the people, I am persuaded that you will concur in the conclusion that an inflexible adherence to a limitation of the currency, at a fixed sum, is an indispensable element in any system of finance now to be

adopted. The holders of currency now outstanding can only be protected in the recovery of just claims by substituting for notes some other security. If the currency is not greatly and promptly reduced, the present scale of inflated prices will not only continue to exist, but by the very fact that the large amount thus made necessary in the conduct of the war, those prices will reach rates more extravagant and the whole system fall under its own weight, thus rendering a reduction of the debt impossible and destroying its whole value in the hands of the holder. If, on the contrary, a funded debt, with interest secured by adequate taxation, is substituted for the outstanding currency, its entire amount will be available to the holder, and the Government will be in a condition enabling it, beyond the reach of any probable contingency, to prosecute the war to a successful issue. It is therefore demanded, as well by the interest of the creditor as of the country at large, that treasury notes be converted into bonds, bearing adequate interest, with a provision for taxation sufficient to ensure punctual payment and final redemption of the whole debt.

The President recommends to the consideration of Congress the report of the Secretary of the Treasury, and hopes it will engross the consideration of that body until disposed of in a proper manner and the important results which the country anticipated from its actions be attained.

The President believes the army to be in a better condition than at any previous period of the war. He recommends the restoration to the army of all who are improperly absent, putting an end to substitution, modifying the exemption law, restricting details and placing in the ranks all able-bodied men now employed as wagoners, nurses, cooks, and other employees doing service for which negroes may be found competent. He concurs in the opinion expressed by the Secretary of War that there is no ground for objection that a new provision, to include those who have furnished substitutes under former laws, would be a breach of contract. The action of the several Executive Departments is reviewed, and the gratifying announcement is made that the receipts of the Post Office Department are six hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars in excess of expenditures.

The communication with the trans-Mississippi is obstructed so as to render it difficult to comply with the Executive needs. Legislation is required, providing for the exercise of temporary authority, especially in the Postal and Treasury Departments, for which substitutes are recommended, while for military affairs it would seem to be sufficient to authorize the President and Secretary of War to delegate to commanding Generals the exercise of the service shall require.

The President adverts to the savage ferocity of the enemy in conducting the war, and holds up to public execration the refusal of the Lincoln Government to execute the cartel for exchange of prisoners; but the patriotism of the people had proved equal in every sacrifice demanded by the country's need, and God has blessed us with success in proportion to our means, and under His divine favor our labor must at last be crowned with success.

Report of the Secretary of War.

The report of the Secretary of War is very lengthy and a highly important document. It briefly refers to the principal operations of the army in the several Departments. Says the campaign of Mississippi was certainly disastrous, and that it is difficult to resist the impression that these disasters were not inevitable; that a Court of Enquiry to investigate the whole campaign met at Atlanta in September, but in consequence of the proximity of the enemy demanding the presence of witnesses and judges at other points, it has been suspended temporarily, but is expected soon to reassemble. Deficiency of resources in men and provisions, rather than reverses in battle, caused the withdrawal of the army from Middle Tennessee. Alludes to deserting, straggling and absentees, and says the effective force of the army is little over half, or nearly two-thirds of the men on the rolls. Recommends the repeal of the substitute and exemption provision, and that all having substitutes be immediately required to go into the field; that the privilege which Congress granted to put in substitutes can be regularly and constitutionally abrogated by the same power. He says no compact was entered into between the government and the person furnishing the substitute, as alleged, but only a privilege of the government accorded. Instead of complaining at the abrogation, he should be grateful for what has heretofore been allowed him. Recommends an abridgement of the exemption, conscribing all and making details for the wants of society at home. Says three years men, when their term expires, cannot be finally discharged. They should be retained, allowing them to choose some existing company, under present organization, in some arm of the service. Recommends the consolidation of companies and regiments reduced below a certain complement. Pays a glowing tribute to the heroism, endurance and unflinching devotion of the soldiers and the lamented dead who have yielded their lives a sacrifice on the altar of liberty.

Morgan's Escape.

We give the following description of Gen. John Morgan's escape from the Ohio Penitentiary, as gleaned from Cincinnati:

Col. Dick Morgan (brother of Gen. John Morgan) and Captains were confined in the lowermost cells, and with knives dug through a floor of the cell, which was composed of cement and nine inches of brick. Underneath the cell was an air shaft running the whole length of the building. This was known to them. Once in the chamber they dug through the earth to the outside wall. Morgan occupied the cell over Col. Morgan. On Friday night as the prisoners were locked up for the night, Gen. Morgan was allowed to change cells with Dick, who, everything being prepared, permitted his brother to take his place.

Some time during the night the prisoners crawled through the hole they had dug under the wall, and which they had carefully concealed, taking ropes with them, they escaped from prison immediately between the building and the female department. When once in the yard, escape was comparatively easy. They went to the lowest corner of the outer wall, near the gate, threw their rope over the top, where it secured itself on one of the spikes, and by the aid of a timber near at hand they clambered to the top and easily descended outside. There are no guard on the outer walls after certain hours. The prisoners were dressed in citizen's clothes, not prison uniforms.

Captain, Hines, who is a mason and brick layer, had charge of the work which resulted in the escape of the prisoners. A note was left for the warden, of which the following is a copy:

CASTLE MAN, Cell No. 20,
November 27, 1863.

Commencement, Nov. 4, 1863. Conclusion—Nov. 20, 1863. Number of hours for labor per day, three. Tools, two small knives. *La patience est amer mais son fruit est doux* (Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.)

By order of my honorable confederates,
T. HENRY HILL, Capt. C. S. A.

One account states that Morgan and his five associates made their way to Canada and had telegraphed to Cincinnati their safe arrival at Toronto. A later account has it that he crossed the Ohio river and escaped into Virginia. Any how, he has safely escaped from his Yankee Ohio friends who liked his company so well that they insisted upon his remaining among them at their own expense and trouble. He will most probably find his "Yankee" retainers for all their attentions and attentions, with interest, fail.

THE BATTLE OF ALEXANDRIA RIDGE.—We copy from the Savannah Republican the deeply interesting account of this battle by its correspondent. From many other sources we glean the following items:

"Brown's, Cummings's, and Pettus's brigade of Stevenson's division (Vicksburg exchanged prisoners) and Reynolds's brigade of North Carolinians and Virginians, greatly distinguished themselves on the 25th."

The Yankee loss on the 25th is estimated at 20,000 killed and wounded. The Confederate loss will hardly exceed 1500 or 2000.

"A thousand men, at a liberal estimate, will cover our entire loss in killed and wounded. But few field officers were lost. The loss on the enemy's side was terrific, having to advance, exposed, up to our fortified lines. They have gained a temporary advantage, but it has cost them dearly."

"One thousand men in killed and wounded, we are assured, will cover our loss during the three days' battle. We cannot ascertain the number of our loss in prisoners. No doubt they are largely overrated as most of them were taken in squads, and many escaped after capture."

"Officers arrived at Atlanta, report that a few days before the late movement of the enemy, Bragg's Chief of Engineers, whose name we have not learned, basely deserted and went over to the foe, giving them full information concerning our strength, position, &c. It is supposed that this induced them to make the attack. This vile scoundrel is a German, or Pole, we forget which, by birth and belonged to the old regular army of the United States."

"As far as public opinion goes, Gen. Hardee is ascribed as the hero of the occasion. To his coolness, sagacity and energy is attributed the vigorous defence of our right. We have seen no one who is not loud in his praise. Other officers, of course, come in for due share of the glory; but the story is Hardee saved the army."

GEN BRAGG.—The gallantry of General Bragg is complimented from every source. In the engagement of the 25th, near Chattanooga, he rode up within one hundred and fifty yards of the enemy, in endeavoring to rally the left wing. Bullets flew thick and fast, but he paid as little attention to them as drops of rain.

"Let all our people rejoice in the terrible loss of the enemy. All is for the best. The hand of the Great Ruler of

the destinies of the people is directing this revolution, and with an abiding faith in Him, our independence will be finally secured. Let us cheer up, keep a stout heart, and do our duty to-day—the future will take care of itself."

State Legislature.

Our columns are too much crowded with other important news matter, to allow a full report of the proceedings of the two Houses. We therefore give the following summary:

In the Senate, the bill to increase the salaries of public officers, was passed by the casting vote of the speaker. A bill to make burning stables, arson, has also passed the Senate; and the bill to promote the growth of wool been rejected. The bill to restore the Spring terms of the Superior Courts, passed. The House bill for the relief of the wives and families of soldiers, has also passed the Senate. A resolution has passed the Senate, giving the Speakers \$16 per day, Clerks, \$20, engrossing Clerks \$16, Doorkeepers \$12. Also, a bill taxing profits on blockade goods. The bill in relation to the Militia and Home Guard defence, passed the Senate, after striking out all exemptions. Also the bill authorizing the Raleigh & Gaston R. R. Co., to raise the rates of transportation. A bill to authorize the payment of State bonds to Banks for temporary loans, was rejected in the Senate.

In the House of Commons, a bill to amend an act for the relief of the wives and families of soldiers in the army, passed its third reading. A bill to limit the production of cotton and tobacco, was rejected. Also a bill to make Confederate money a legal tender. The following bills have passed the House: To amend sec. 85, chap. 54th of revised code; for the establishment of graded schools in North Carolina; relative to working public roads, fines delinquents \$5 instead of \$1; a bill authorizing the Public Treasurer to issue small Treasury notes to the amount of four hundred thousand dollars, passed the House. Also the bill prescribing the duties of Treasurer of the Literary fund. Also a bill to change the time of holding the County Courts of Wilkes. The following bills have also passed the House: To incorporate the Lackville Mining and Manufacturing Co.; to enforce the criminal laws of the State; incorporating the N. C. Volunteer Navy Co.; authorizing Public Treasurer to issue Confederate money in payment of outstanding debts against Literary board; and the bill to increase the salaries and fees of public officers. A bill to exempt from conscription certain State officers, in addition to those heretofore exempted, has passed the House. [The exemptions are as follows: Justices of the Peace appointed prior to May 11, 1863; County clerks and collectors; registers; tax collectors; one deputy sheriff in counties where there is no tax collector; constables who gave bond prior to May 11, 1863, and their successors in office; one deputy clerk for each court when necessary; one county commissioner for distributing funds and provisions for the relief of soldiers' families; agents appointed by the Legislature for any purpose; commissioned officers of the militia and home guard, mayors and police of Raleigh, Wilmington, Salisbury, Charlotte, Fayetteville and Goldsboro'; board of internal improvements, literary board, and employees of the State Government.]

The two Houses have resolved to adjourn sine die on the 14th.

Hon. B. H. Hill, of Ga., has published a card, calling upon all the officers and soldiers who are away from their respective regiments, to return to their posts. He says if they had been there, those belonging to Bragg's army, that instead of being defeated, they would have been before Nashville this day; and that even now, if they will return promptly, Grant's army will be destroyed or captured, and when this is done the war cannot last much longer, for Lincoln's power will be broken. It is said that out of 103,000 names enrolled in Bragg's army, only forty thousand were present for duty! Gen. Lee's army is said to be weakened almost as much for the same cause.

What can be expected in such a state of affairs as this? Certainly nothing less than defeat. Forty thousand effective men pitted against a hundred thousand! Is it any wonder that we hear bad news? Have we any right to listen for anything else? In the name of reason let the fighting men gather to their commands. Let public opinion come to the aid of the suffering heroes in the front, who are fighting at these terrible odds, and fill up the ranks again.

It is ridiculous for Congress to talk about changing the conscript ages from 16 to 50, when more than half the army we now have are skulking duty, abusing furloughs, thronging our railroads and hotels; gallanting ladies, and enjoying the hospitalities of friends at home who have little idea that they are skulking from the army and that they are so much needed there.

As Mr. Hill says:—"Let the Press, the people, the old men and the ladies, ply the absconcees, and make them feel what is true—that absence is *per se* disreputable. Let nothing but absolute sickness excuse. No man can serve two masters; and no man belonging to the army can discharge his duty in any other position. This was Gen. Longstreet's emphatic expression."

THE VERY LATEST NEWS.

The latest advice from Gen. Longstreet's army, represent his forces in line of battle at Rutledge, his rear guard skirmishing with enemy, whose pursuit has not been vigorous since our forces left Morrison. Our cavalry were skirmishing all day Monday with the advance of Wilcox forces on Clinch river. Capt. Everett's raiding party returned to Abingdon yesterday. He attacked the enemy at Mount Sterling, Ky., and routed them after a stubborn resistance, during which the Court House and Jail were burned. He captured a large number of fine horses, and a hundred thousand dollars of greenbacks. The enemy being heavily reinforced he retreated rapidly through Pound Gap, closely pursued by twelve hundred cavalry who are reported to be at Gladeville, Va.

BIVOUAC, 4th Reg. N. C. Cav., Dec. 2. Mr. Estlin: As movements of vast importance are now transpiring in this part of the moral vineyard, and knowing that the people at home are desirous of information from the hills of expected conflict, I have concluded to spend a few moments in preparing a short narrative, giving all the reliable information I can gain in relation to the affairs on the Rapidan. On the 20th ult., the quietude of our supposed winter quarters was put in motion by the dashing of a dozen couriers frantically by, and soon the order came for the commanders of the regiments to provide their commands with ammunition, sufficient for a battle, and also be ready with (7) seven days rations, to march at any moment. In a few moments the second order came to mount and move to the front. So we had to bundle up our traps at 10 P. M. and move off to parts unknown, through the cold. We proceeded six miles towards the Rapidan, were halted and permitted to dismount and build little fires to ward our frozen extremities. Soon on the 27th, the column was put in motion, and in front, headed by the gallant and esteemed Generals, Hampton and Gordon. Gordon's Brigade moved off to the right of Vidierville, arrived at the Plank road, when Gen. Stuart, as usual when a fight is on hand, appeared. The 4th was ordered to front, mounted: one squadron of the 5th and 2d were ordered to sharp shoot on foot, and soon the carbines commenced and were replied to by Yankee infantry by the thousand, apparently. Gen. Gordon gave the order—*drain sabre—charge!* Away went the 4th headed by the gallant Captain Johnson and Adjutant Moore, but as Gen. Gordon always sees as far into the front as any body, he ordered the 4th to halt, as it was impolitic to charge an infantry column, posted as it was, and for about one hour we were held in plain view of the enemy, subjected to the fire of the whole Yankee front. While in this horrible position, Capt. J. I. Bryce, Co. E, was severely wounded in the foot; Capt. Johnson, Co. A, (commanding the regiment) Lt. Wilson, Co. G; Lt. Lewis, Co. D, and two of Co. A, had their horses shot dead; only one man was seriously wounded. We were then ordered to fall back to a better position, where we were joined by Gen. Young's Brigade and a portion of Gen. A. P. Hill's corps. A sharp skirmish ensued, resulting in the repulse of the enemy.

On the 28th, Gen. Hampton with a portion of his division made a raid in the rear, engaged the Yankee cavalry, whipped and routed them, pursued them for four miles into their camps, captured 400 prisoners, destroyed an amount of stores, &c., &c., turned about for our lines, run into a corps of infantry, which caused the loss of about one half the prisoners, the balance were brought safely into Dixie: our loss quite small, only one killed in our brigade—(a member of the 1st N. C. Regiment, the best cavalry regiment ever mustered.) Gen. Gordon had a horse shot under him.

Since that date our division has been doing picket duty down about Antioch Church, and sharp shooting against the Yankee infantry by the day on the right of our lines.

The boys are all in fine spirits, and feel confidence in the skill of their Commander-in-Chief to plan and their ability being fortified by justice and honor to execute, and victory must and will perch on our banners. It is very quiet to day, no cannon even firing, but the volcanic crater will break loose and that soon. Of the slight engagements of Sabbath last between the infantry, &c., you are advised. Therefore, I will close for the present—pardon this.

Yours Respectfully,
Co. A, 4th Reg N. C. Cav.

OBITUARIES.

Died, on the 20th November last, at Allensville, N. C., with the spasmodic croup, Horace Thomas, only child of Wm. H. and Josephine C. Royster, aged 16 months, and 4 days.

WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE 12th December, 1863, A CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S MUSICAL SOUVENIR for 1864.

Consisting of three original and beautiful Songs with Piano Forte accompaniments. No. 1—entitled "Fairies have broken their Wands." (T. Hood.) No. 2—entitled "The Lover's Wish." (F. W. Rosier.) No. 3—entitled "I Know a Maiden Fair to See." (H. W. Longfellow.) Handsomely illustrated, with colored title, in four printings, and on first-class paper. Price: \$3.00—half off to the trade. G. DUNN & COMPANY, Publishers, Richmond, Va.